



Grateful CI alum returns to campus with a gift

Camarillo, Calif., Dec. 17, 2010 - In 2006, Antonia DiLiello graduated from CSU Channel Islands (CI) with a bachelor's degree in History. This would not have been so extraordinary if she had not been 80 years old, the oldest graduating student in the University's brief history.

On Monday, Dec. 13, DiLiello returned to CI to present a check to Dr. Jose Alamillo, Associate Professor of Chicano/o Studies, in the amount of \$1,100 to benefit the Chicana/o Studies program. DiLiello had asked her friends, on the occasion of her 85th birthday, to donate to this program instead of buying her gifts.

DiLiello mentioned that her father had come to El Paso, Texas in 1918 with his brother and brothers-in-law. They worked for the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe Railroad. He moved his family to Oxnard in 1932, when DiLiello was four.

When DiLiello married she moved to Los Angeles but six months later her husband was killed in a car accident, so she returned to Oxnard where her first baby was born. DiLiello remarried and the family moved to Camarillo where they lived for 20 years and her second husband worked at Camarillo State Hospital, now CSU Channel Islands.

In 1991, DiLiello went to Arizona for a year to teach bilingual orphans in a residential facility. "I really loved working with the kids and I think they loved me," she said. "I would have stayed but I got homesick and, at the end of a year I moved back to Oxnard. I always move back to Oxnard."

DiLiello was motivated by a love of learning and began taking classes at CI not because she wanted a degree but simply because learning gave her great pleasure, particularly history classes. She recounted that in one class someone asked the professor a history question to which the professor responded, "Ask Antonia. She is history." To this day she can't understand how she did it. "I worked eight hours a day, ran a house and cared for a family, and went to school."

When asked why she chose to give her gift to the Chicana/o Studies program DiLiello said, "I've seen so many kids who wanted to go to school and couldn't afford it. My brother wanted so badly to stay in school but he was ashamed that he didn't have the right clothes to fit in. Isn't it a shame not to go to school because of clothes? I hope my gift will help others in some way."

Attached photo:

CSU Channel Islands alum Antonia DiLiello (second from left) presents a check to (l to r) Frank Barajas, Associate Professor of History; Jose Alamillo, Associate Professor of

Chicana/o Studies; Marie Francois, Chair of History and Chicana/o Studies, Associate Professor of History.

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Placing students at the center of the educational experience, California State University Channel Islands provides undergraduate and graduate education that facilitates learning within and across disciplines through integrative approaches, emphasizes experiential and service learning, and graduates students with multicultural and international perspectives.